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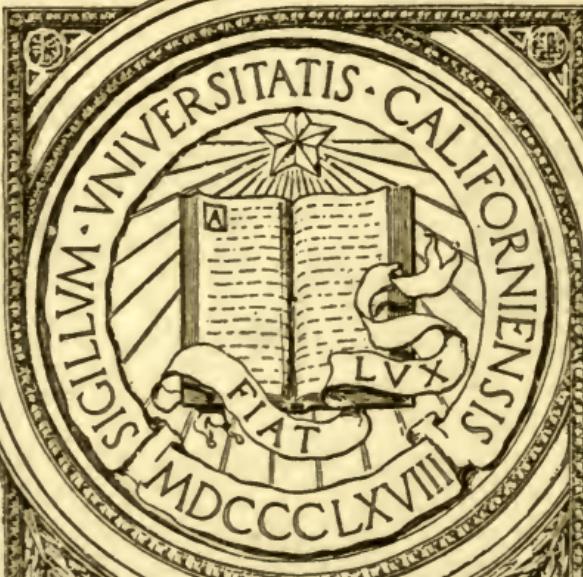
The
Soul's Rubáiyát



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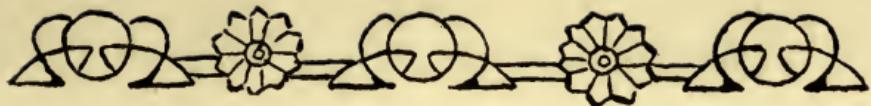
me
fled;

ad.



Ahurâ-Mazda,
Persia's ancient god:
What planets now revere
his lifted rod?



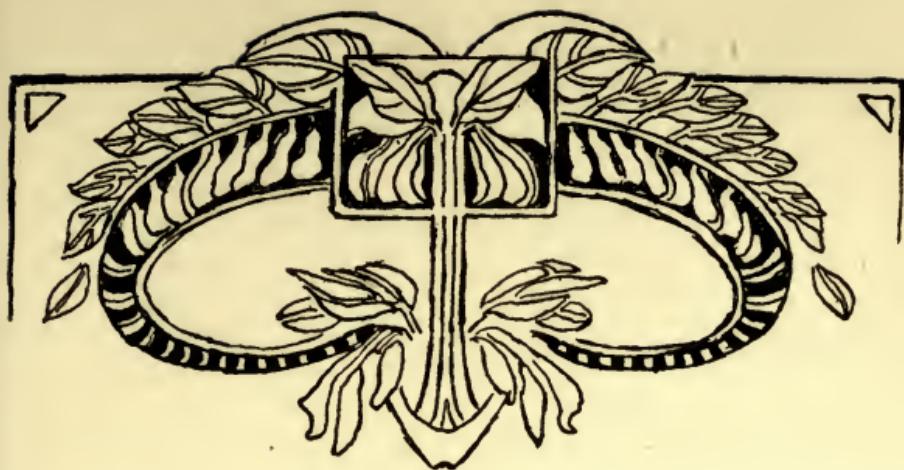


The Soul's Rubáiyát





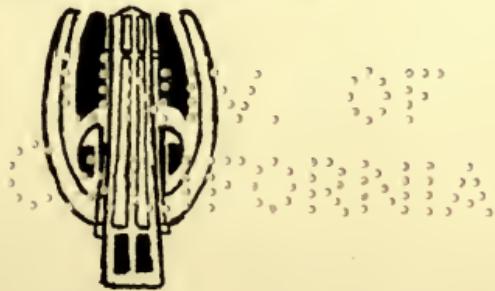




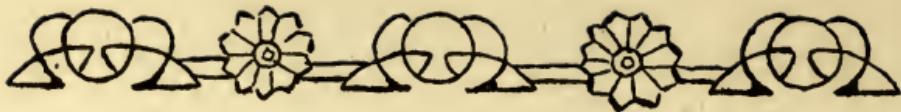
The Soul's Rubáiyát

Amelia Woodward Truesdell

Illustrated by
Marion De Lappé



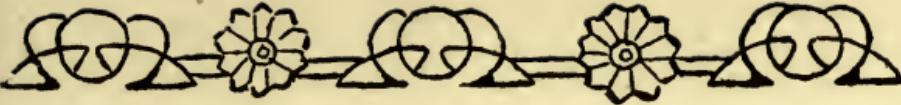
San Francisco
A. M. Robertson
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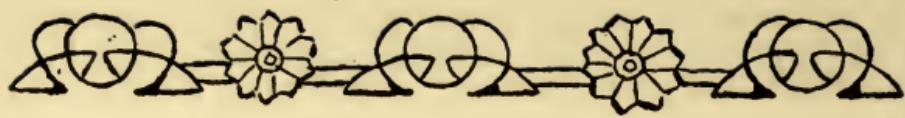
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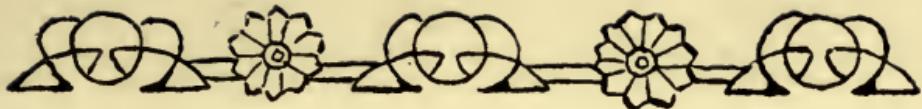
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San Francisco



The Soul's Rubáiyát





*O Pars, awake! The humming-bird's
a-wing;*

*Still thrills the nightingale's sweet
welcoming.*

*Lo, from the hills—the Spring, her hair
snow-splashed!*

*Rose gardens burst to wildest
blossoming.*

*But night owls hoot around Persepolis;
Where jeweled feet have trod, the
serpents hiss;*

*To these dead halls there comes no
Springtime bliss:*

*My time-old search for truth is but as
this.*

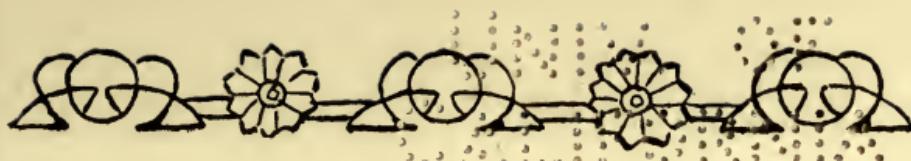
*This quest sung he who took the Vine
to Spouse;*

*Nay Pars, why from thy thousand
dreams arouse?*

*If dark thine ancient doors, where
dwells the light?*

*In Omar's harp, why wake despair's
carouse?*





The Soul's Rubáiyát

Part I

I

Of him who walked a thousand years
ago

In Persian vales, and studied human woe
And the great Ruler's scheme to man, I
read

And wondered if aught more to-day we
know;

Aught more, life's puzzle-riddle solve
than he;

The Whence, the Why, the Whither, and
To-Be.

We still are groping for the Great
Reply;

Through veils and forms, O God, we
search for Thee.



II

He taught beneath the rose-trees of Irán,
This poet, seer, philosopher; this man
Who spared not all his learning's
treasure trove.

But vain his wisdom of the star-writ
plan!

Still would the multitude, like driven
swine,
On superstition feed, and call it wine
Of life, though bitter with the creeds
of men;
For sleek Tradition cried, "A draught
divine!"

III

Tradition! Serpent-born at Eden's gate,
Still deifying fetish, faith, and fate;
On altars strange, his false lights
burning yet,
Still blind men's eyes unto their high
estate.



Tradition! Keeper of the deadly keys
Where souls are locked in darkness, fed
on lees
Of legends steeped in dreams, dank
cloister weeds:
O God, how could'st Thou look and
suffer these?

IV

From wading in the muck of daily care,
From 'midst the ashes of dead hopes'
despair,
Our souls still wait, with long endurance
dull,
And lifting helpless hands cry "Master,
where?"

"A score of centuries since Jesus died,
And Sin our daily comrade still?" we
cried.
His life! And could it be in vain?
Then weep,
Weep on thou mother of the Crucified!



V

I, loved the high Ideal I called the Lord;
I worshiped at that shrine with heart's
accord.

Athwart the altar trailed a serpent Doubt,
And left envenomed there the name of
God.

With the Almighty would you make a
trade,

As with a huckster by the road-side
paid?

So much salvation for so much shed
blood,

And thus your own just penalty evade?

The soul revolts at such a sacrifice,
Such banal temporizing with a vice;
The sweetest life the world has ever
known

Is lost to earth for me—unworth the
price?



Who then shall weigh the thing we call
a sin?

For ages God mayhap to man has been
More lenient than His sons. He knows
so well

How weak He made him from without,
—within.

VI

All consecration knows the scourge: the
scorn

Of words which cuts the heart as did
the thorn

The Master's brow; and through a
dolorous way

It mounts its calvary of crosses borne.

Vicarious ever is earth's pain; that pain,
The life-sweat of one body's loss or
gain.

None stands alone. Each hapless child
of sin

Is linked to me. See that 'tis not in
vain.



VII

From Ark of the old faith my soul went out.

Philosophy she skimmed, that sea of doubt,—

But eddying circles in a darkening whirl,

Maelstrom of words! It was a sorry bout.

Where ancient Nilus and the Indus taught;

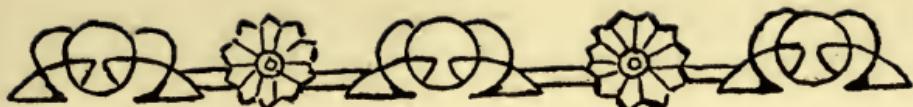
Confucius with his measured wisdom wrought,—

No foot-stay there, no olive-branch I found;

But wreckage of a flood of surging thought.

Through mosque and Buddhist temple, silence-shod,

To fires of old Irán and budding rod
Of Aaron, back the devious way I trod;
And lo! I found me many a Sphinx-like god.



But all their lips in silence were and
scorn,
At my poor search through shrines
where ages gone
Had left their manual of a bootless
quest:
For them, no star of some new faith
unborn!

Altars and tombs showed man in tragic
fray
Of creeds, but still the slave of
yesterday;
His dread of change, slow death unto
the faiths.
Better a red-robed charlatan at play!

VIII

And still the Potter's wheel is turned by
Fate:
He tosses out our shards of love and
hate
As whirls the clay about. We wonder why
We hold such scraps and shreds for our
estate.



Sharp-edged tools within an infant's hand!

These passions which we did not
understand

Surprised us by their mastery. Then who
Had right for us, such dangers to
command?

Did Cain, that life was sacred
comprehend?

Then why distraught when he, without a
friend,

Went forth? Did Judas know his kiss
of death

Would mark *for him*, of heaven and
earth the end?

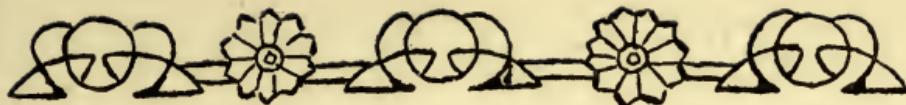
IX

For Truth I searched a hundred seas
and lands;

I heard his call and ran with
outstretched hands;

But when I thought I had his foot-
steps traced,

He just had gone to walk on other
strands.



All up and down the streets and
country roads,
I asked for him. Men pointed to the
loads
Upon their backs and dumbly plodded on.
These body needs—accurséd Eden 'goads!

X

Within the dark I heard a voice one
night,
And all the air was vibrant with the
light,—
Some thought that crashed its zigzag
way; and then
An Error's mocking laugh. The ribald
wight!

I thought one day I'd caught his
beckoning glance;
Covered with light—Transfiguration's
trance—
I stood with souls in white. I raised my
eyes,
Then hope was naught but memory of a
chance.



XI

We read that Truth from one eternal
place

To us shall ever turn a changeless face,
A phantom mirror in his hand forsooth;
Of yesterday, to-day reflects no trace.

For Science changes every hour her
schemes;

Empiric! What to-day as fact she deems,
Next year is refuse by the wayside flung;
For souls in mortal need, what good are
dreams?

XII

I questioned Nature for some comfort-
screed;

For high analogies; God's word and
deed

Must blend in one great scheme of law.
Quoth she

"The individual is a worthless weed."



The specie life with its unbroken train
Is Nature's god; and this for souls in
 pain?

As cold as death she reads her cruel
 creed:

“You're weak? Then pass; the
 strongest must remain.”

XIII

It is the old estate of me and thee;
Dividual life lost in captivity
Unto the whole. “What means the
 world to me?”

Thus Omar cried. The end? Earth
waits to see.

Since his red wine a thousand years of
 work;
Its bold results our logic may not shirk.
But of God's mind to man,—the Unit-
 Soul?

Says Nature's law, “Away with shrine
 and kirk.”

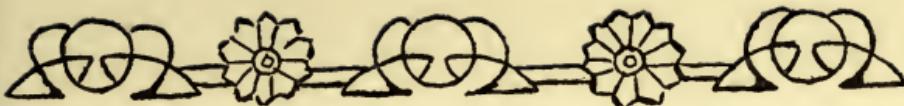


XIV

O Truth! Bemasked with smirk of
every race
Thy brow! How shall we know thine
alien face
By strange device of old and new
disguised?
Yet souls distraught still seek thy
dwelling-place.

We would believe thy hidden brow is
bright,
Immortal reflex of the Essence, Light.
Why change thy raiment with the
beggar Doubt,
With all her shams and trumpery
bedight?

Too faint thy image is in science' well
Thy mark uncertain as the sagas tell.
O Truth, tear off thy masks, and pray
make haste,
Or Doubt shall cast us into deepest hell.



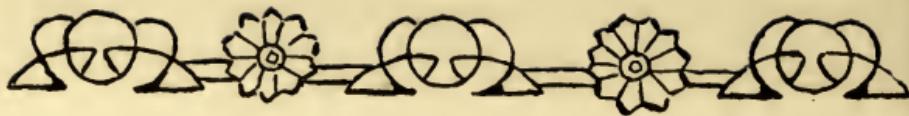
XV

O for Ithuriel's heaven-tempered spear!
Some spirit talisman that's crystal-clear!
Encased within this casket of dull clay,
What chance has man the truth to know
or hear?

Silent, Thou God, as Thy unanswering
sky,
Perhaps sometime, Thou'l^t tell Thy
creatures why
The true and false are dual-unity.
And now, have mercy if in sin we die.

XVI

Since Death turned down the Persian's
empty glass,
The sun has seen the train of centuries
pass;
Uncertain-lipped, we question still the
law,
And still to us the heavens are as brass.



And when the past has swallowed up
to-day,

The future from us stolen nigh away,
We feel the shiver of the river-brink,
Ah, then forsooth we'll grovel,
whining, pray !

Aye, pray to one we never have
addressed ;

Reach for the cup our lips have passed
unpressed ;

See heaven shrivel and shrink above our
heads ;

Ye Moths !—my kin ! Where shall we
then, unblessed ?

XVII

My soul go hence ! This strife is idle
hum ;

This life the beating of an empty drum ;
A Holy Grail evanished is this Truth.

Back to thy nothingness ! Thou slave,
be dumb.



And when again th' Eternal Sákis use
This earthern bowl I found, but did not
choose,
Still other bubbles in to pour, its clay
The flavor of mortality may lose.

XVIII

Will its new lips be only formed to
sigh?
Our questions, will it face with dreary
eye?
Nay, nay, I've wept its tears, this
beaten clay;
For man will then have come the Great
Reply?

Beneath this star-splashed, zodiac-painted
bowl
Down-pressed, we crawl with smothering
of soul;
Is it uplifted for the Súfi seer
Whose tragic songs to us through
centuries roll?



XIX

Omar! Ah, do you yet the mystery
know?

Is Death a Fakir with no wonder-show?
Or have the Pleiads now no room for
souls,

The I, the You, diffused in ether-flow?

Through space as winds Death's
caravan its train,

Have you aught sweeter found than
earth-love's pain?

Flesh-robe of sorrow must you wear
again?

Why dream I, mad? All dreams for
man are vain.



The Soul's Rubáiyát

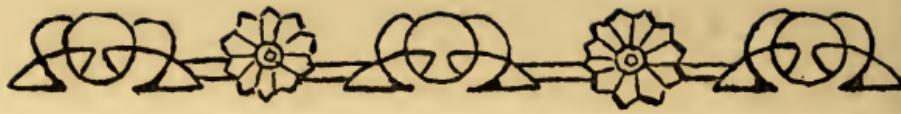
Part II

I

The I, the Creature Man, unto my soul:
"Would'st look within the Ruler's great
Earth-Scroll?

The folded centuries up-gather then;
By History's torch new-lit, the tale
unroll.

"'Tis travail and the sweat of blood for
thee;
The fixed stars of belief reel drunkenly;
Thy sun is blotted out; *thy* God
eclipsed;
Go find us life; this chaos strangles me.

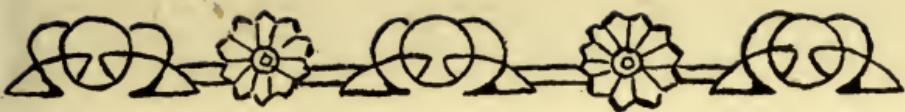


II

“Rugged the moutains round thy
pathway close;
From peak to peak, far-glittering with
the snows
Of Reason’s eyrie home. In what deep
hell
Beside thee Doubt, with torch inverted,
goes.

“Through legend-vales thou’lt follow pale
Despair;
Doubt’s poisonous night-shade, but no
hope-ray there.
When plaints the ringdove for her Yúsuf
lost,
Thou soul, alone, wilt echo ‘Where, O
where?’

“But oh! through stress, lose not thy
God; no God?
Rather I’d be again my native clod;
Would set thee free from this earth-
hampered flight.
Make haste: I see too near the broken
sod.



“Press on till bulbuls to the lark repeat
Thy prayer, thine incense for the
heavenly seat;
Till thou with morning’s messenger
canst sing
‘ ‘Tis there!—red roses crushing at thy
feet.

III

“Set up thine altar then, emblazoned
TRUTH,—
The IN HOC SALUS of thy faith
forsooth;
And thy libations pour, my heart’s best
wine;
There sacrifice the treasures of my
youth.

“Thy JESUS HOMINUM SALVATOR
too,
This shrine may prove,—those altar-
legends true;
As from the dying seed new breath
suspites,
From faith’s dead husks Christ-life may
spring anew.

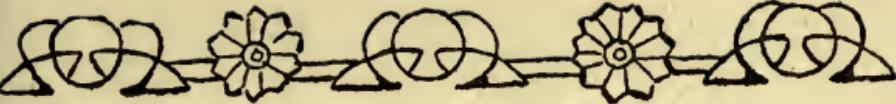


IV

“Stand up before thine altar now and
swear,
Thou priestess Soul, that to our God
Thou’lt bare
Thy brow unto whatever name be true;
Forgotten be the seal it used to wear.

“Thou’lt flinch not when old altars fall
to naught.
Theologies stripped to the quick of
thought,
And faiths, the sinews of thy life,
inwrought
With thy heart-threads, thou’lt give for
freedom bought:

“ ’Tis spirit-vision with the single view,
A talisman to test the false and true.
No double thought; no judgment in
reserve;
Mammon or God; thou can’t not serve
the two.



V

"That thou wilt do all this for thee and
me,

Swear it, as there is love 'twixt me and
thee."

And as she passed, my heart wept bitterly:
Yet 'tis man's only hope that thought
be free.

But oh! the hurt when old beliefs are rent
From lives by church-yard door-ways
long content:

O dogmas sacred as the mother's breast!
Make haste with healing lest the years
be spent.

* * * * *

VI

She came. Her step scarce moved her
vestments' fold.

The law was written in her lips' stern
mould;

I cried aloud, "O my beloved speak."
Far off her voice; her eyes were deep
and old.



VII

“Two graven tablets found I by the
way:

One chiseled by the Past, one by To-day:
All faiths must read by these or else we
say,

‘Perhaps the master-gravers were at
play.’

“History and Science—friendly scribes,
if reads

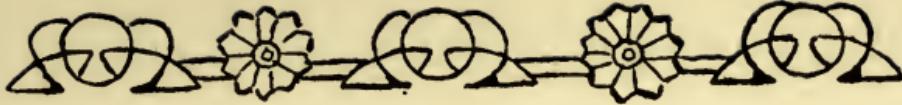
The reader well; they mark man’s
changing meeds.

When Knowledge swings the world in
line with law,

She’ll show God’s purpose to the human
needs.

“For individual lives, encrusted long
In chrysalis of creeds, are with a song
And spread of wings outbursting to the
hope

That Fear as fetish is a primal wrong.



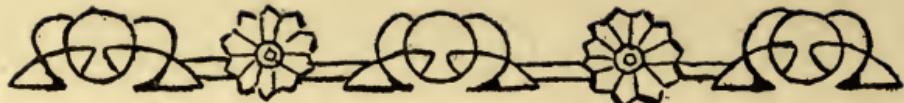
VIII

“These crowds that with a nation’s
vigor burned,
Whose souls for truth of their Creator
yearned;
They sought a Christ but found
Tradition’s hell;
What wonder if to God-distrust they
turned?

“But sons of God, the seal is on them all;
Not potsherds set in rows against the wall.
With errors drugged, they stir as men
in sleep;
New life a-thrill, they would shake off
the thrall.”

IX

“Yea soul, but veinings of a leaflet’s plan
Go read,” I cried. “From it the Maker
scan.
The individual, what is *he* to God?
O tragedy of him, the Unit-Man!”



X

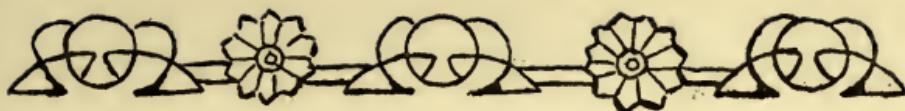
And long I waited while she wandered
—where?

* * * * *

Far off I saw her, resurrection fair
Of form; her face a glory from within;
I knew she had with spirits swept the
air.

““Tis Love,” she cried. “A heart of
love the key
That opens now the one life-truth to
thee;
That God is love to man, and only love,
To His own children whom He would
make free.

“In lights sur’fine—the tints from
desert sands—
Beside me stood a man with piercéd
hands,
His brightness shaded by the mantling
sun;
His voice,—no sound so sweet on
summer strands.



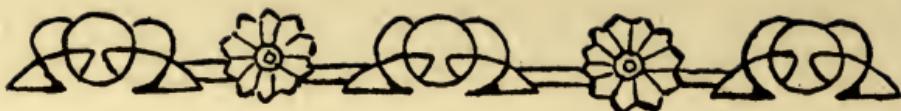
XI

*“‘Man is not left alone upon the sod
Of earth, his home, though often weary
trod;
God’s amulet of love, within he bears;
No heart that loves can ever lose its
God.*

*“‘And when thou bearest to the river-
brink
Thy talisman of love, thou shalt not
shrink;
And there the Angel of eternal life
‘Shall lift her Cup o’er-flowed, and bid
thee drink.’*

XII

*“And he was gone. The Mother-Earth
looked up,
A twilight on her face; the hasty sup
Of sweetness, fragrant on the desert air;
Earth sighed for yet a cup—a brimming
Cup.*



“A tender mantle of his thought to thee
Fell on me as he passed. Love gives
thee free

Salvation from the ‘Body of this death,’
The world-old fetish, dread of God’s
decree.

XIII

“Even as on Judea’s mountain-side
He spake. And then I knew with
vision wide,

Not lore occult nor dogmas complicate
Made of the Nazarine, the Crucified.

“But patience meeting wrong with
meekness mild;

Simplicity with wisdom of a child;
And charity’s clean hand that cast no
stone,

And raised the weeping Mary, undefiled.



“It is the *spirit* of the Master’s thought;
Not deep developments, by scholars
wrought

Of doctrines that would shrivel on the lips
Which ‘Peace and good-will’ from the
manger brought.

“Spirit of love all human and divine;
One chalice ruby with his heart’s red
wine,
From lip to lip, the Rabbin then shall
pass
In mosque-cathedral-temple, one pure
shrine.

XIV

“And there shall come a time of
Pentecost
To thee upon thy homeward way, but
lost;
When ‘tongues of fire,’ a spirit flame,
the *truth*
For thee, shall heal thy heart, sore
question-tossed.



“Then life shall be an Olivet of peace,
And from its height thy vision shall
increase

To unknown kingdoms of His love and
joy,
Till doubts like waves on a dead sea
shall cease.

“Be it Love’s Zion-heights immortalized,
Be it Gethsemanes pain-solemnized,
Be it the cross of life-hopes sacrificed,
Thine eyes shall see the fields
emparadised.”

XV

She ceased. And from her eyes'
uplifted sight
A splendor filled the deepness of the
night:
Oh, mantle of the hope that covered me!
O Truth, the glory of that desert light!



XVI

“Accept defeat as to Creation’s plan,”
I cried. “There is no other peace for
man.

The *De Profundis* of a life is this,—
Would god be God if I His will could
scan?

“Now in the sun I set the bowl to-day:
What matter be it brazen bowl or clay?
It gathered up the light of yesterday;
To-morrow it shall draw a brighter ray.

XVII

“Once Ramoth scoffed and clashed the
heavenly keys;
One door defied his hand. ‘What then
are these?
Insult from Him?’ he cried. Then
Astrofel,
‘The mystery of His Godhead wouldst
thou seize?’

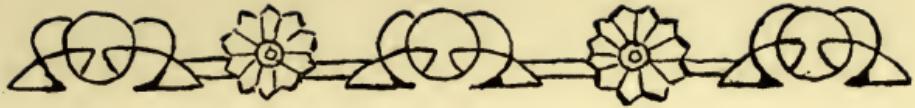


“So I, the Self, this terror-stricken lord
Of earth who is afraid to meet his God,
Upon th’ Eternal Sword would lay a
hand,
And would compel th’ Almighty’s final
Word.

XVIII

“Forever vanished now the great
god Fear;
Released his captives, to the daylight-
cheer.
Gone too, the little gods of fretting
creeds;
But Love remains and God is there—is
here.

“I see men perjured, mad with lust of
fame;
I see them reeking with the gutter’s
shame.
Behold! they rise and call upon God’s
name;
For Fear lives not, but Love with eyes
of flame.”



XIX

O Love, our refuge in earth's wildest
storm!

O Service, life-breath of a heart that's
warm!

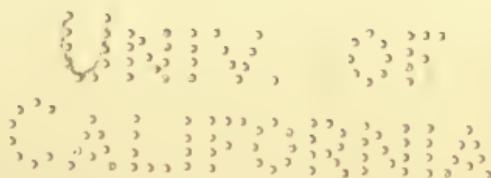
A dual-unity, of heaven born;
For love is service in its highest form.

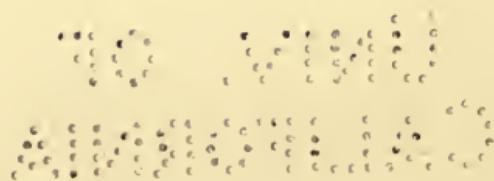
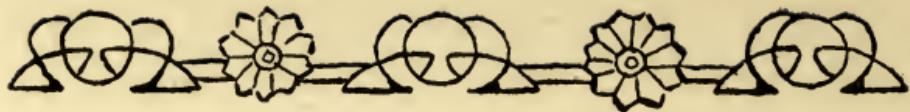
Flame-tints that shimmer on the desert
air!

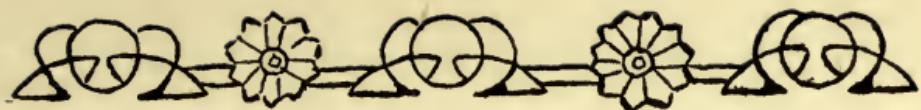
Love-lights that make Life's sands a
garden fair,

Where joy and pain sing softly to the
soul

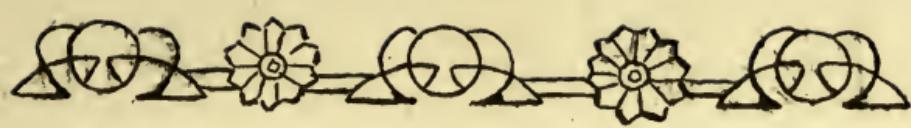
That God in man is Love in human
care.











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